

IN THE CLAIMS

Claim 1. Cancelled

2. (Original) An electromagnet composed of a coil, a movable iron core adapted to move on the center axis of the coil, and a stationary iron core provided so as to cover the upper and lower surfaces and the outer peripheral surface of the coil, characterized in that a nonmagnetic protrusion is provided to the stationary iron core on a side where the movable iron core is inserted, the movable iron core is composed of a plunger and a steel plate fixed to one end part of the plunger, an end face of the plunger and the stationary iron core, and the steel plate and the protrusion are opposed in the same direction, and a permanent magnet is arranged in a zone surrounded by the plunger, the protrusion, the steel plate and the stationary iron core.

3. (Original) An electromagnet as set forth in claim 2, characterized in that a distance between the end face of the plunger and the stationary iron core is set to be shorter than a distance between the steel plate and the protrusion.

Claims 4-9. Cancelled

10. (Currently Amended) An actuating mechanism for a switching device, ~~as set forth in claim 9, characterized in that~~ by a plurality of ~~said~~ electromagnets having one and the

same kind are used in combination, each said electromagnet being composed of a coil, a movable iron core adapted to move on the center axis of the coil, and a stationary iron core provided so as to cover the upper and lower surfaces and the outer peripheral surface of the coil, wherein a permanent magnet is arranged in a gap surrounded by the movable iron core and the stationary core and the movable iron core is attracted by the stationary iron core by a magnetic field created by the permanent magnet; and further characterized by contacts which can make contact with and separate from each other, a turn-off spring for opening the contacts, and a power source circuit for selectively applying forward current and reverse current to the coil in each electromagnet, and wherein when the forward current is applied, the contacts are turned on while the spring is urged so as to maintain a turn-on condition by means of an attracting force of the permanent magnet while when the reverse current is applied, a magnetic flux produced by the permanent magnet is cancelled out so as to effect a turn-off operation by a force of the turn-off spring.